

Cache Conservation News

Winter 2001

A newsletter of the Blacksmith Fork and North Cache Soil Conservation Districts

Every day is Earth Day for Farmers and Ranchers

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

*By Gordon Zilles, Chairman
Blacksmith Fork Soil Conservation District*

Cache County farmers and ranchers can expect a visit in the next few months from a team of agriculture partners. They are offering their help in inventorying and assessing your animal feeding operation.

These on-farm visits are not regulatory. Rather, the visitors are neighbors and friends—teams of conservation and commodity group partners—who have chosen to take a proactive approach to improve Cache County's water quality.

Team members will help valley farmers and ranchers evaluate their ag operations, identify potential improvements and point them in the direction of possible funding for those projects. Funds and project designs may be available for those who choose to cooperate.

We encourage producers to greet your visiting conservation partners with an open mind. This is a unique window of opportunity for producers to make voluntary improvements to facilities.

The conservation districts and our partners are here to help you improve your operation and protect our valuable water resources.

Inventory of Cache County feeding operations underway

A team made up of a soil conservation district supervisor, a farm bureau representative, and a member of the appropriate producer group (dairy, beef, swine, poultry, mink) will contact owners of animal feeding operations to help them conduct their operational self-survey and to include the results in an inventory data base that Farm Bureau will hold. Summary watershed reports will be generated from this data base but no names will be attached to reported information.

We hope that livestock producers will be proactive, and join with the district in meeting the requirements of the Utah clean water strategy. Working together, we can stay ahead of heavy-handed regulations and demonstrate that Utah producers are, have been, and always will be, wise and vocal stewards of the land.

For more information or to answer questions you might have please contact Paul Leishman, 752-5068, Mark Peterson, (801)450-5981, Greg Radmall, (801)368-7403, or Penny Trinca, 753-6029.

--Penny Trinca, UACD

EXTENSION CORNER

'Farm' the internet

Agriculture has evolved from a labor-intensive industry to a knowledge-based industry. Our success depends on having the best knowledge available when we need it.

Now a serious, disciplined, inquirer can find more information faster and easier from the Internet than by using almost any other source. Over 60 percent of all Utah homes have a computer and the majority of them use the Internet. If you are uncomfortable trying your electronic wings, invite a child or a grandchild to get you started, Today's kids have been raised with computers and often serve as mentors for the older generation. Here are three simple suggestions that will help you gain confidence.

First, type a word into the "search for" window on almost any search engine and see what comes up. You will likely find a multitude of information, from a variety of sources, with the latest and (hopefully) best information on that subject.

Second, find your favorite websites and "bookmark" them. That will save a lot of needless wandering in the future. Your bank of favorite sites will expand over time, and you will find some great "links" to other sites.

Third, learn how to e-mail. I must warn you that once you start, you are hooked. Your ability to communicate quickly, and with a multitude of people is amazing. You will need to compile e-mail addresses of those you want to communicate with. As your address book takes shape you will be impressed with how easy it is to get immediate information to individuals or to entire organizations.

Those of you who need a starting boost, check out the websites in the adjoining box. They will open a whole new world of information for you.

—Clark Israelsen
Cache County Extension Agent

The Beginners Address Book

Utah State University Extension	http://www.ext.usu.edu
Utah State Dept of Ag & Food	http://www.ag.state.ut.us
Utah Farm Bureau Federation	http://www.fb.org/utfb
Utah State Legislature	http://www.le.state.ut.us
U S Department of Agriculture	http://www.usda.gov
U S Congress	http://thomas.loc.gov
National Assn of Conservation Districts	http://www.nacdnet.org

New Bear River RC&D Coordinator is on the job

Scott E. Ferguson has filled the vacant RC&D Coordinator position at the Logan USDA Service Center. Scott started his career in Utah 20 years ago as a Range Conservationist. He has spent the last eight years in NE Arizona as District Conservationist for Arizona Association of Conservation Districts Zone 4, which included three Indian and four Anglo Natural Resource Conservation District boards. Scott and his wife, Allyn, are originally from Logan, and are happy to be back, with their three children. Scott is looking forward to working with the district supervisors in Cache Valley, as well as in the other assigned areas of Utah and SE Idaho.

ACTION BY THE BOARDS OF SUPERVISORS

Joint Action

- Sponsored teachers attending the Food, Land and People Workshop;
- Began inventory of animal feeding operations;
- Recommended approval for an Agriculture Protection Area for Lynn and Tama Mathews in Hyrum.

Blacksmith Fork

- Approved conservation plans for Kurt Mitton;
- Approved purchase of two conservation water pumps for demonstration projects.

North Cache

- Approved conservation plans for Chris Griffin, Willis Hall Family Trust, Derwin Merrill, Russell Hirst and Steve Bodily.
- Construction begun on three properties to control bank erosion on the Cub River.
- Accepted Scott Wallantine as cooperator.

EXPLORING THE WEB

In this issue, we premiere a new feature that we hope will benefit Cache Valley's producers and others who are interested in agriculture. Our intent is to describe where on the Internet you can find important information concerning agriculture. If you have a favorite website or a question about the Internet that you would like to see covered here, we would like to hear from you. -- Ed.

Utah State Legislature, <http://www.le.state.ut.us> -- The legislature convened January 15. Here you can find the text of bills being considered by the legislature, and track their status. You can look up the Utah Code and read the Constitution. Click on "Find Your Legislator", then "All Legislators" and you get an alphabetical list with address, phone number and e-mail address of most legislators. Click on Representatives or Senate, and you get a map that outlines the districts. Click on the district where you live and the name of your representative appears, with a brief biography, and a list of committee assignments.

The U.S. Congress, <http://thomas.loc.gov> -- *Thomas* is maintained by the Library of Congress. *Thomas* carries the full text and summaries of bills before Congress, and their status. It contains the Congressional Record, committee reports, schedule of hearings in both the House and Senate, and much more. You can send an e-mail message to your Congressman or Senator. You must include your regular mail address, for any response will be by U.S. mail.

National Association of Conservation Districts, <http://www.nacdnet.org> -- The NACD annual meeting will be February 4 to 8 in Fort Worth, Texas. Check here to see the program highlights and biographies of the key speakers, and during or after the meeting, to read the proceedings. Come here for information on proposed legislation concerning conservation issues, and to learn about the various programs of NACD. Subscribe to e-Notes NACD.

Utah Farm Bureau Federation, <http://www.fb.org/utfb> -- Read reports on the state Farm Bureau Annual meeting held in November, and other news concerning the activities of the Farm Bureau. Review the Farm Bureau policies on important issues. Locate the Farm Bureau staff, and the county Farm Bureaus, and explore important links to other sites carrying agricultural, legislative, and market information. Back up to www.fb.org and you will be on the *American Farm Bureau* site, which carries the same kind of information on the national level. Check this page for the proceedings of the AFBF annual meeting January 7–10.

UDOT studying Highway 91 improvements

Mostly favorable comments were heard by the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) when it held a public open house last month in Richmond on the plan to widen Highway 91 from Smithfield to the Idaho border. Construction is expected to begin in 2003.

The purpose of the Highway 91 project is to improve highway safety, traffic flow, and the condition of the pavement. The highway will be widened to four lanes to accommodate the nearly 11,000 vehicles that travel through Richmond each day, and the expected increase in traffic through the next 25 years.

UDOT has contracted with ENTRANCO Engineers, a consulting firm, to conduct environmental studies, including noise analysis and hazardous materials studies. When completed, the information will be used to produce an Environmental Assessment, and a public hearing will be held. A wetland study has already been completed, and clearance has been received from the Army Corps of Engineers.

Several design alternatives are being studied. Issues being considered by UDOT include pedestrian underpasses or overpasses, impacts to businesses and residents, preservation of historical sites, utility and irrigation facilities, and landscape and lighting in Richmond.

Water Policy Advisory Board authorizes studies

The Cache County Council approved the \$50,000 budget requested by the Water Policy Advisory Board, an increase of \$10,000 over last year. At its December meeting, the board approved the expenditure of \$10,000 for a continuation of the Geologic study of groundwater resources conducted by USU Professor-Emeritus Robert Q. Oaks, Jr. It also approved \$8,000 for a study by Dr. Tom Lachmar, and agreed to request Dr. Wynn Walker to submit a proposal for a study on seepage from irrigation canals.

The Oaks study seeks better understanding of the aquifers through geologic mapping, radiometric age dating, and gravity measurements, mostly of the Salt Lake Formation.

The proposed Walker project concerns seepage from irrigation canals. Large quantities of water are being lost from canals before it is put to its intended use, and the Walker study would seek better information on how much water is lost, and where it goes.

The Lachmar project would search all available research data in order to refine the current USGS water model that was first published in 1994. The intent is to make the model more usable in making water management decisions.

Logan High teacher wins statewide award

Logan High School science teacher Jack Greene was recognized recently for his "life-long dedication to inspire students to go beyond the classroom to learn about, protect and enhance Utah's natural resources." He was named Utah Secondary Teacher of the Year by the Utah Association of Conservation Districts.

"Your energy to get students to take action and be involved in the community will be a lasting influence for the good of the environment and your students," said Randy Greenhalgh, president of UACD.

Greene has been involved in many environmental education efforts throughout the state, including the Bear River watershed education program, "A River Runs Through Us," in which teachers and students monitor watershed health and restoration projects.

Greene is adviser to the Logan High School Envirothon team, which this year placed first in the state, and represented Utah at the Canon Envirothon in Nova Scotia. He is chair-elect of the Utah Envirothon Steering Committee.

New Rules proposed for animal feeding operations

The EPA has proposed sweeping new regulations governing animal feeding operations. Among other things, the proposed rules, if implemented, will change the definition of a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) to include the land where animal wastes are applied, as well as the feedlot area; provide that the agricultural stormwater exemption does not apply if an excess amount of animal wastes are applied

to the ground; and include requirements for the application of manure on land that is not under the control of the CAFO operator.

Poultry, veal and swine operations will be required to prevent all discharges from their waste storage pits and lagoons; several exemptions from permits will be eliminated; spreading of manure will be limited.

Some who have looked at the proposed regulations believe they would be a severe hardship for many livestock operations. For more information, visit <http://www.epa.gov/owm/afo.htm> on the Internet. Then send your comments to the EPA. Comments from the public will be accepted until mid-April.

Federal agencies propose raising Hyrum Dam

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Reclamation have proposed to enlarge the Hyrum Reservoir. They have proposed the dam be raised at least 50 feet and a maximum of 90 feet to provide storage for the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge.

The bird refuge in Box Elder County needs a flow in the Bear River of 1500 cubic feet per second in order to provide wetlands throughout the refuge. In August the flow in the Bear River is less than 500 cubic feet per second. As a result, during the average summer, 36,000 acres of the refuge are dry and only 10,000 acres are wet. If the refuge had storage for 50,000 acre feet of water, 41,000 acres would be wet during the average summer, and only 5,000 acres would be dry.

. Representatives of the two agencies recently presented their proposal to the Cache County Water Policy Advisory Board. The project is in the preliminary investigation stage. Preparations are being made to formalize the proposal by taking it to Congress for funding of further studies and planning.

If the Hyrum dam were to be raised, it would also be upgraded to current safety standards. The only homes that would be affected are those at the dam site. Hyrum State Park would be relocated. The reservoir would remain within the boundaries of the land already owned by the Bureau of Reclamation.

GLEANINGS

The Bridgerland team of NRCS, in its annual performance review, was commended for its excellent working relations with other agencies and the conservation districts, and for its use of this newsletter to get information to the public. The Bridgerland team covers Cache, Box Elder, and Rich Counties.

Eighteen environmental organizations have made plans to shut down all grazing on public lands, using the Taylor Grazing Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The New Mexico-based Paragon Foundation is planning a substantial campaign to counter this threat, and is asking for help from ranchers and their organizations. (Call toll-free 877-847-3443 or visit <http://www.paragonpowerhouse.org>.)

Carbon County has become the first county in Utah to enact a timber harvesting ordinance. The ordinance requires landowners to obtain a Timber Harvest Permit before any commercial harvest of more than 99 tons.

In Washington State, a jury found that the state's restrictions on timber harvest denied the owners of a 232 acre parcel "all economically viable use" of the property, and the state was ordered to pay \$2.25 million to the owners.

Deregulation and establishment of a free market in electric power are blamed for the sudden increases in energy prices in California and the West. For another point of view, go to www.mises.org/ for an article by George Reisman, professor of economics at Pepperdine University, Los Angeles.

More than half of Southern California's shoreline from Santa Barbara to San Diego is unsafe for swimming after rainstorms because of bacteria carried to the ocean by urban runoff. The problem is getting worse as the population grows and additional pavement increases the runoff. Under the federal Clean Water Act, local governments are responsible for ensuring that storm water runoff contains no contaminants.

--LA Times, 11/29/00 <http://www.latimes.com/news/state/20001129/t000114418.html>

Police in Britain arrested a 29-year-old man and charged him with causing criminal damage for "raiding a field and creating patterns out of flattened wheat", more commonly referred to as "crop circles."

Utah student scores on the soils section of the Utah State Standardized Science Test have improved an average of more than 20 percent since the "Dirt: Secrets in the Soil" program was introduced about two years ago. The curriculum was developed by Utah Agriculture in the Classroom and partners and included teacher in-service training on how to use the instructional video and lesson plans

-- NRCS This Week 10/27/00

Comments sought on State Water Plan

Comments on the draft of the new Utah State Water Plan were received until January 19. The plan, entitled *Utah's Water Resources: Planning for the Future*, is available from the Division of Water Resources, or online at <http://www.nr.state.ut.us/wtresc/waterplan/>

The document summarizes key statewide data concerning water resources, use, and availability. It addresses issues of importance to future water planning efforts, identifies water use trends and makes projections of future water use. It also explores various means of meeting future water demands and identifies important issues that need to be considered when making water-related decisions.

CONSERVATION CLASSROOM

Teacher resource: Utah Agriculture in the Classroom

We all partake of agriculture every day. Whether it's the food we eat, the clothes we wear, or the homes we live in, agriculture is our connection to life.

With only 2 percent of our population producing food and fiber for us all, many of your students have no idea where their food and clothing come from.

So where can you find information and resources to teach your students about agriculture? Utah Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) has ideas, activities and resources that can be integrated into many areas of the Utah core curriculum.

Learning about agriculture is a new adventure for most students. Educationally they explore concepts and content about the things that make a difference in their life every day. The Utah AITC program has materials that will allow your students to visit a virtual "pizza farm" (www.pizzafarm.org), learn the "rotten truth" about composting, take a virtual farm tour or test their knowledge with an ag literacy quiz.

Utah Agriculture in the Classroom offers a resource center here in Logan where you can check out various materials, kits, videos, games, educational units and software to teach students how everyday items are related to science, math, language arts and other core subjects. Regular hands-on in-service workshops are also offered throughout the state.

For more information visit Utah Agriculture in the Classroom on-line at www.ext.usu.edu/aitc or call Project Director Debra Spielmaker at (435) 797-1657.

-- Jennifer Hines, UACD

The 2001 Utah Envirothon set

The 2001 Utah Envirothon will be May 11–12 in Draper.

The Envirothon is a competitive two-day natural resource education event for high school students. Teams of students are tested on their knowledge of natural resources in five study areas: forestry, soils, aquatics, wildlife and a current environmental issue. The 2001 issue is urban nonpoint source pollution.

Winners of the 2001 Utah Envirothon win a trip to the Canon Envirothon this July in Mississippi. If you would like to field a team to the Utah Envirothon, contact State Coordinator Jennifer Hines, at 753-6029, ext. 36.

COMING EVENTS

Utah State Legislature convened Jan. 15, 2001.

Women in Agriculture Conference, Jan. 31 to Feb. 2, 2001, Provo Marriott Hotel. Contact USU Extension Conference Services, (435)797-0423, or <http://extension.usu.edu/confer/womenag/home.html>.

Utah Envirothon, May 11–12, 2001, Draper, Utah. Contact Jennifer Hines at 753-6029 or jennifer-hines@ut.nacdn.org.

Utah Soil Conservation Commission meeting and Field Day, May 17–18, 2001, Logan. Contact Penny Trinca at 753-6029.

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